

PRESS RELEASE

The U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security announced June 8 that U.S. citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda who have applied for but not yet received passports can nevertheless temporarily enter and depart from the United States by air with a government-issued photo identification and Department of State official proof of application for a passport through September 30, 2007. The federal government is making this accommodation for air travel due to longer than expected processing times for passport applications in the face of record-breaking demand.

The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) was mandated by Congress in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 to strengthen border security and facilitate entry into the United States for citizens and legitimate international visitors. WHTI requirements for air travel took effect on January 23, 2007.

Adults who have applied for but not yet received a passport for travel to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda should present government-issued photo identification and an official proof of application from the U.S. Department of State. Children under the age of 16 traveling with their parents or legal guardian will be permitted to travel with the child's proof of application. Travelers who have not applied for a passport should not expect to be accommodated. U.S. citizens with pending passport applications can obtain proof of application at: <http://travel.state.gov>.

Important note: This accommodation does not affect entry requirements to other countries. Americans traveling to a country that requires passports must still present those documents.

Since implementation of the WHTI Air Phase, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has and will continue to exercise its current authorities in unique circumstances to allow individuals subject to the WHTI requirements into the United States based on other evidence of identity and citizenship.

As early as January 2008, the departments will begin to implement WHTI at land and sea ports of entry. A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking outlining a phased implementation is expected to be published in the Federal Register within the next two weeks.

Travel document security remains a top priority for the U.S. Government. Both the 9/11 Commission and the U.S. Congress urged strengthening of travel documents to prevent entry of terrorists across our borders, reduce use of fraudulent documents, and speed up entry procedures.

END PRESS RELEASE.